

Red Hill, Kitchen  
Patrick Henry National Memorial  
Brookneal Vicinity  
Charlotte County  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1034-C

HABS  
VA,  
20-BROOK,  
1-C-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
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VA,  
20-BR00  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### RED HILL - KITCHEN (Patrick Henry National Memorial)

HABS No. VA-1034-C

**Location:** Approximately 1.1 miles south of State Route 619, 5.3 miles south<sup>east</sup> of Brookneal, in Charlotte County, Virginia.

**Present Owner/Occupant:** Patrick Henry Memorial Foundation.

**Significance:** Red Hill was the final home and burial site of Patrick Henry (1736-99), prominent Revolutionary War and early national patriot, politician, orator, and lawyer. Henry was a leader in provoking and organizing resistance to British government of the colonies. He served as governor of Virginia five times in the 1770-80s, during the American Revolution and its aftermath, and led the opposition to ratifying the U.S. Constitution in Virginia in 1788. He thereafter withdrew from state politics and resumed a successful law practice. Henry occupied Red Hill from 1794 until 1799, the year of his death. Red Hill is a 1950s interpretation of a typical well-to-do eighteenth-century planter's home in Southside Virginia. While this building is alleged to represent the original Henry kitchen, there is no evidence of how this dependency appeared. The present kitchen resembles--in basic form, scale and materials--a typical detached eighteenth-century kitchen.

In 1978 the U.S. Department of the Interior recognized Red Hill as a national landmark and entered the property in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1986 the property was designated a National Memorial to Patrick Henry by an act of Congress.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History:

1. **Date of erection:** The original Patrick Henry plantation was built at least by 1794; the much-altered and enlarged dwelling burned in February 1919. Reconstruction of the kitchen was completed in 1956.
2. **Architect:** Stanhope Johnson designed the reconstruction.
3. **Original plans and construction:** A copy of Stanhope Johnson's 1956 reconstruction plans are on file in the Red Hill archives. All buildings at Red Hill date from the restoration/reconstruction.

- B. **Historical Context:** The eighteenth-century detached kitchen in Virginia was typically the second most valuable building of a plantation (after the residence), located an average of 20 feet from the dwelling. The reason for this is twofold: to alleviate the heat and odor associated with cooking during hot summer months, and to reduce the risk of burning the dwelling should a fire ignite the kitchen. It was also one of the most valuable plantation dependencies, based on a survey

of contemporary insurance documents. In form, these summer kitchens were usually a rectangular or square plan with a large chimney and notably large hearth, the latter featuring a separate brick bake oven and related cooking and warming spaces. Clark, in her essay describing Red Hill in 1923, wrote, "on the side lawn, to the west of the house, screened off from the rear by a high box-hedge and a tremendous holly tree, is the kitchen--one of those proverbial Virginia country kitchens that were so far away that hot battercakes had to be brought to the house on horseback!" (Clark, 288).

Architect Johnson was pleased with the Red Hill structure, writing in 1959, "the kitchen is outstanding, I think, of everything in Virginia from a quaint architectural standpoint."<sup>1</sup> In fact, the fittings, materials, and proximity of the reconstructed kitchen do not conform to the modest form of others in the state. For a general context, see Dwelling report.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

### A. General statement:

1. Architectural character: The structure is reminiscent of traditional eighteenth-century detached kitchens in Virginia--one story, small rectangular plan, with a large gable-end chimney and hearth. However, some materials and features reflect a glamorous rather than an accurate restoration of late eighteenth-century styling.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Description of exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 17'-0" x 14'-0"; a shed roofed addition, 9'-2" x 8'-0", extends from the south wall.
2. Foundations: Brick laid in Flemish bond. Three courses of brick are exposed beneath the structure.
3. Wall construction: The walls are clad with lapped, beaded and horizontal weatherboard, each with approximately 4-3/8" of exposure and corner-molding. The north pediment features three diamond-shaped vents.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood frame.
5. Chimney: A single large, brick exterior ridge chimney is located at the south gable end; it is shouldered and topped by two wider courses of brick.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanhope Johnson to Mrs. Vera Oldham, 22 December 1959. Stanhope Johnson Papers, Red Hill Restoration File, Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways, doors: The kitchen entry is the only opening on the west facade. The doorway on the east facade leading into the shed has no door. Both are reached by a single flagstone step. The kitchen door and the interior door between the kitchen and the shed are both of board-and-batten construction.
- b. Windows, shutters: The kitchen features two six-over-nine-light double-hung wood sash on the north and east facades. Both have exterior louvered wood shutters.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof of the main block has a slightly steep pitch, with the ridge oriented north to south. The roof is covered with wood shingles lapped at the roof ridge.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Boxed eaves with shingle and bed molding.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The building contains a single rectangular room with door openings on the south and east walls. The shed wraps around the southwest corner of the chimney in an approximate square plan.
2. Flooring: Brick, with a flagstone hearth.
3. Wall, ceiling finish: The walls are composed of irregular-width horizontal tongue-in-groove paneling with bead molding; the ceiling is clad with the same material, which is stained or painted a dark brown color. Wood baseboards with floor molding extend around the perimeter of the room. Two strips of pegs on boards, about 33" from the floor, are located on the east and west walls.
4. Doorways, doors: The door between the kitchen and shed is vertical board-and-batten construction; a 4"-diameter hole at the base serves as a "cathole."
5. Decorative features, trim: Two floor-to-ceiling built-in wood corner cabinets are located in the northeast and northwest corners. They have two openings each: a full-height door on the bottom and a smaller single door at the top. The fireplace has no mantel, but a brick shelf is located about 5' above the hearth.
6. Hardware: The cast-iron and bronze fittings were made by James Peterson and Sons of Philadelphia, including clasps and H-hinges on the cabinet

doors, long V-shaped hinges attach to the horizontal battens of the doors, door handles, pot hooks for the kitchen fireplace, the bake oven door, hearth crane, and fittings for the shutters. The exterior door is fitted with a modern yale lock and bolt. A cast-iron boot scraper is located by the west entrance of the kitchen.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The kitchen is east of the dwelling with the entrance on the west facade facing the house. It is the first in a row of dependencies that are linearly perpendicular to the ridgeline and orientation of the dwelling; to the east is a lawn and garden area, and the cemetery. South of the kitchen is the privy.
2. Outbuildings: In addition to the kitchen, the estate includes the dwelling and five primary outbuildings that are described in individual reports: addendum to law office, VA-1034-A; smokehouse, VA-1034-D; privy, VA-1034-E; stables and carriage house, VA-1034-F; and slave cabin, VA-1034-G.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION: See Dwelling report, VA-1034-B.